Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for ~~predicting survival~~ determining mortality risk of an organism, said method comprising:

a) determining telomere length of a somatic cell of said organism; and

b) correlating said telomere length with mortality risk associated with somatic cell telomere length in a population of the organism.

Claim 2 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein in said organism is human.

Claim 3 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein telomere length is the average telomere length.

Claim 4 (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein said average telomere length is determined by polymerase chain reaction.

Claim 5 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein said telomere length is determined from blood.

Claim 6 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein said telomere length is determined from lymphoid cells.

Claim 7 (original): The method according to claim 7, wherein said lymphoid cells comprise T cells.

Claim 8 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein said population is age matched with said individual organism.

Claim 9 (original): The method according to claim 8, wherein said aged matched population is within about 10 human years of the age of said individual organism.

Claim 10 (original): The method according too claim 9, wherein said aged matched population is within about 5 human years of the age of said individual organism.

2

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method according to claim 1 wherein said mortality <u>risk</u> is from infectious diseases.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method according to claim 1, wherein said mortality <u>risk</u> is from vascular disease.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The method for ~~predicting survival~~ <u>determining mortality risk</u> of an organism, said method comprising:

a)   determining the rate of telomere length decrease <u>in a somatic cell</u> of said organism; and

b)   correlating said rate of decrease with mortality risk associated with rate of telomere length decrease in <u>the somatic cells of</u> a population of the organism.

3